



# Guideline of Digital Projects RFPs Preparation

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# 01. Introduction

The government procurement of communications and information technology products and services contribute to supporting the digital transformation process in Saudi Arabia and achieving the aspirations of Vision 2030. As a matter of integrating the efforts of government entities in Saudi Arabia regarding unified procurement procedures according to a future digital procurement plan that will contribute to improving the efficiency of digital procurement and enhance the quality of digital services provided for beneficiaries.

This Guideline is intended to provide guidance and information on how to implement various digital government procurement activities that follow international best practices, ensuring consistent and unified procurement methods at the level of all government entities. Moreover, this Guideline is intended to provide detailed guidance, technical considerations, and regulatory requirements to support government entities in procuring appropriate digital products and services, and to effectively prepare Request for Proposals (RFPs) to ensure the selection of appropriate vendors to meet their needs.

Based on their competences, the Digital Government Authority and Government Expenditure & Projects Efficiency Authority (EXPRO) have prepared this Guideline for preparation of the RFPs for communication and IT projects (Digital Projects) with the objective of providing government entities in Saudi Arabia with the best guidance for preparing the RFPs for digital procurement during the need planning period, which leads to an increase in the effectiveness of digital procurements.

Shall there be any data mentioned in this Guideline that contradicts the provisions of the announced laws, regulations and controls, then only the provisions mentioned in such approved laws, regulations and controls will be approved.

## 02. Guideline Objectives

1. Ensure the application of best practices for digital procurement among all government entities by following the common guidelines for the preparation of digital RFPs.
2. Provide government entities with appropriate guidance for the preparation of digital procurement specifications.
3. Maximize usefulness when developing digital procurement strategies by procurement teams and deliver long-term benefits.
4. Promote transparency and compliance with regulations and legislation.
5. Enhance value for money, efficiency and effectiveness through digital procurement procedures.
6. Raise the level of transformation of digital expenditure models based on services rather than procurement of assets.

## 03. Guideline Scope

The scope identifies the topics covered by the Guideline in figure 1 below.

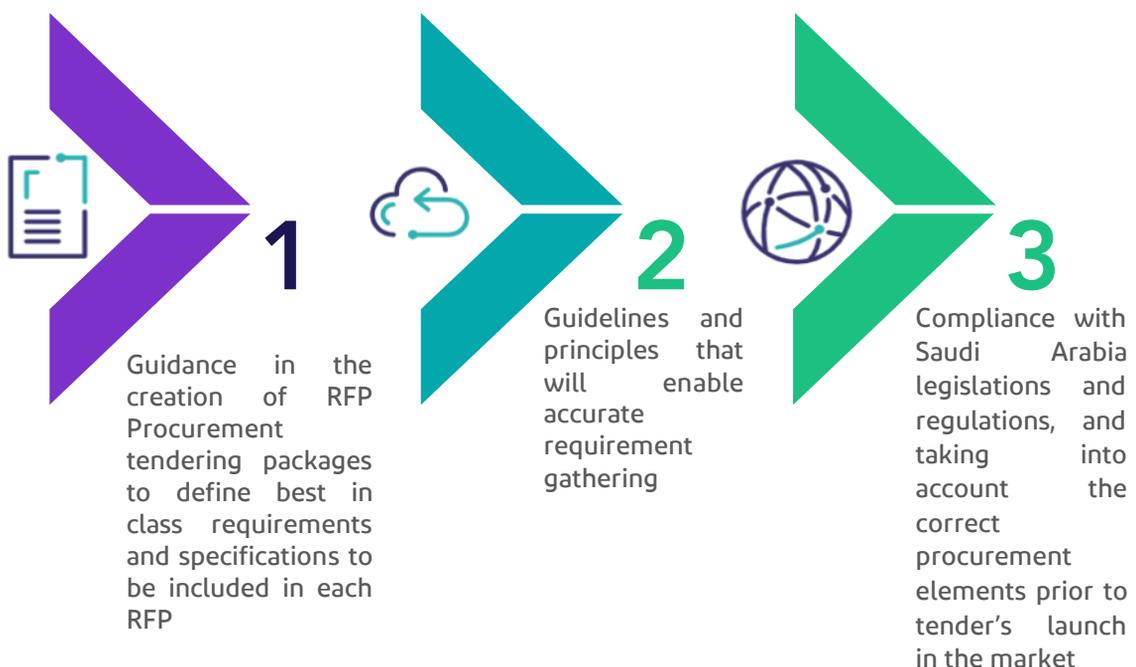


Figure 1: Types of directions provided by the guideline to government entities

## 04. Target Groups

This guideline applies to government entities and Procurement officials for communication and IT Projects “digital projects” at the government entities to implement the best practices in application of the Government Tenders and Procurement System and Regulations thereof.

## 05. The Guideline

### 5.1 Digital Procurement Strategy

The government entity sets out a clear strategy for digital procurement that will enable it to identify the requirements, resources, support and implementation mechanisms to be included in the RFPs document more effectively and clearly.

To this end, the procurement team in each government entity shall carefully prepare feasibility studies and estimated costs for procurement and digital business, in addition to developing an integrated understanding of the RFPs objectives, and to define the requirements and statement of work, assess market capabilities to meet such requirements and identify risks to procurement. The government entity can use expertise and competence when developing technical specifications for digital procurement.

All procurement activities shall be carried out through “Etimad” platform along with following the official contracting methods as specified in [the Government Tenders and Procurement Law approved by Royal Decree No. \(M/128\) dated 11/13/1440 AH and its executive regulations approved by Ministerial Resolution No. 1242 dated 21/03/ 1441 AH, amended by the Ministerial Resolution No. 3479 dated 11/08/1441 AH](#) or any amendment, law or regulation in replacement thereof.

#### 5.1.1 Framework Agreement

Before opting to create a new RFP for a new product or specific products or services, the government procurement team shall investigate whether an existing Framework Agreement is in place for those products or services targeted to be secured by the EXPRO. The government entity may not secure the procurement or carry out the work included in the lists prepared by the competent authority for the consolidated procurement except through the framework agreements concluded by the competent authority for the consolidated procurement except under a statutory instrument.

Procuring products and services through a Framework Agreement will provide government entities with several benefits as shown below:



Figure 2: Benefit of procurement through Framework Agreements

## 5.2 RFP Checklist

This section includes a checklist that will enable government entities to prepare RFPs and ensure that all required aspects are examined and included in the RFP, in order to increase the effectiveness of digital procurement activities. The Digital Government Authority provides advisory support to government entities- if desired - in determining the scope of the project and reviewing offers and recommendations.

Sequence	RFP Checklist contents
1	Specification <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project Scope</li> <li>• Technical specifications</li> <li>• Fostering Service Based Projects Vs Asset Purchase</li> <li>• Analysis of basic and subsidiary needs</li> <li>• Understanding the user's needs</li> <li>• Accessibility</li> <li>• User Privacy</li> </ul>
2	Vendor Selection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vendor Pre-qualification Criteria</li> <li>• Vendor Pre-qualification Assessment</li> <li>• Vendor Pre-qualification Selection Criteria</li> </ul>
3	Cyber Security Controls
4	Vendor Evaluation Criteria in response to RFPs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choosing the RFP Assessment Criteria</li> <li>• RFP Evaluation Criteria Technical and Financial Evaluation</li> <li>• Financial Risk Management</li> </ul>
5	Definition KPIs and creation of SLAs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Service Level Agreements (SLA) Considerations</li> <li>• Key Performance Indicators Considerations</li> </ul>
6	Clarification Question Form
7	Vendor Technical and Financial Bid Sheets

## 5.2.1 Specification

Specifications are a set of considerations that must be taken into account to ensure that the RFP documents are prepared in accordance with best practices to guarantee that the requirements are set at high quality for market vendors.

### 5.2.1.1 Project Scope

Project Domain is a key element of the tender as it stipulates the deliverables or services required to fulfil the contract, and outlines the type, level, and quality of the services, as well as timescale.

The project scope shall be detailed, precise and clear to ensure that the requirements of the Government are well understood by vendors, thereby avoiding the risks of poor performance of vendors as a result of their misunderstanding of the scope of the project and their obligations.

The project scope consists of several sections containing the following information described in (Figure 3):



Figure 3: Project Scope components

In addition to the information described in (figure 3), the government entities may include additional information or sections as per its own requirements within the scope of the project or special conditions. The following are examples of these additional sections:



### 5.2.1.2 Technical Specifications

The section of specifications within the [IT Services RFP](#) includes a list with clear technical details and specifications its intact interpretation by vendors. Inaccurate interpretation of this RFP could lead to differences in prices and outputs. Also, clarifying the RFP will allow for a larger number of vendors to participate in the tender.

The technical RFP for the proposed works and procurement shall be detailed, accurate and clear, and take into account the approved standards or international specifications regarding the items that do not have approved national specifications. The RFP shall not include a reference to a certain type or item, specify a certain trademark or trade name, or stipulate specifications that apply only to certain contractors, producers, or vendors. The government entity shall not exaggerate the technical specifications, and the same shall not exceed the needs and requirements of the project and the financial appropriations allocated thereto. In the event that the requirements of the government entity are complex, the government entity may develop a brief document for the required solutions detailing all the specifications in a separate annex when tendering.

**When defining the technical specifications, the government entity shall consider the following options:**

- List the specific solutions required subdivided in their components and features (i.e., a key processor capability or a specific screen resolution)
- Specify which might be the minimum requirements sought after (i.e., minimum software version installed or minimum memory size) for the vendor to tailor an innovative solution based on its own business offerings
- Define the desired productive output or function for the new solution by focusing on what needs to be achieved (i.e., the number of pages to be printed in a given period or multi-language software support)

Besides the clear technical specifications and requirements, each government entity may provide an opportunity for potential vendors to suggest alternative or innovative services to the main scope of work, and to clarify the rationale behind the value added. In such a case, the government entity shall request vendors to include these technical specifications of additional services in their technical presentation documents so that it can compare vendors' offers (If innovative additional services are requested, this criterion shall be included in the trade-off technical evaluation) with a detailed review of additional services to minimize the risks arising from ad hoc or tailored solutions as required because such solutions may affect final cost, output and delivery times and increase dependencies on a particular vendor.

In the event that the technical specifications and requirements, and final contractual conditions are not fully and accurately defined, the government entity may offer the tender in two stages; due to the complex and specialized nature of some businesses and procurement as indicated by the Government Tenders and Procurement Law and its executive regulations.

### 5.2.1.3 Fostering Service Based Projects Vs Asset Purchase

The government entity shall consider service-based solution models (service purchase) along with identifying delivery model alternatives that reduce the need for solutions that require substantial investment in assets and physical infrastructure to deliver the required technology solutions. This means that in their relationship with vendors, government entities shall move away from transactions based solely on the purchase of goods and assets, and move to the purchase of services from integrated service providers who support the agencies to achieve their objectives. Within this new model of relationship, service vendors can provide fully managed services without the Government's need to invest in assets or asset support resources.

Also, service-based business delivery models shall be fostered rather than assets, for example: Cloud technologies may be a key solution if they are consistent with relevant policies and regulations applicable in Saudi Arabia.

### 5.2.1.4 Analysis of basic and subsidiary needs

When preparing RFPs, the government entity shall ensure to clearly explain its requirements for digital purchases. The need for basic and subsidiary products and services shall be defined in detail in the RFP scope of the work and the bill of quantities, ensuring the achievement of the project's objectives.

As an illustrative example, (Figure 4) below illustrates the life cycle of defining the actual requirement for basic and subsidiary products and services in detail in the bill of quantities.

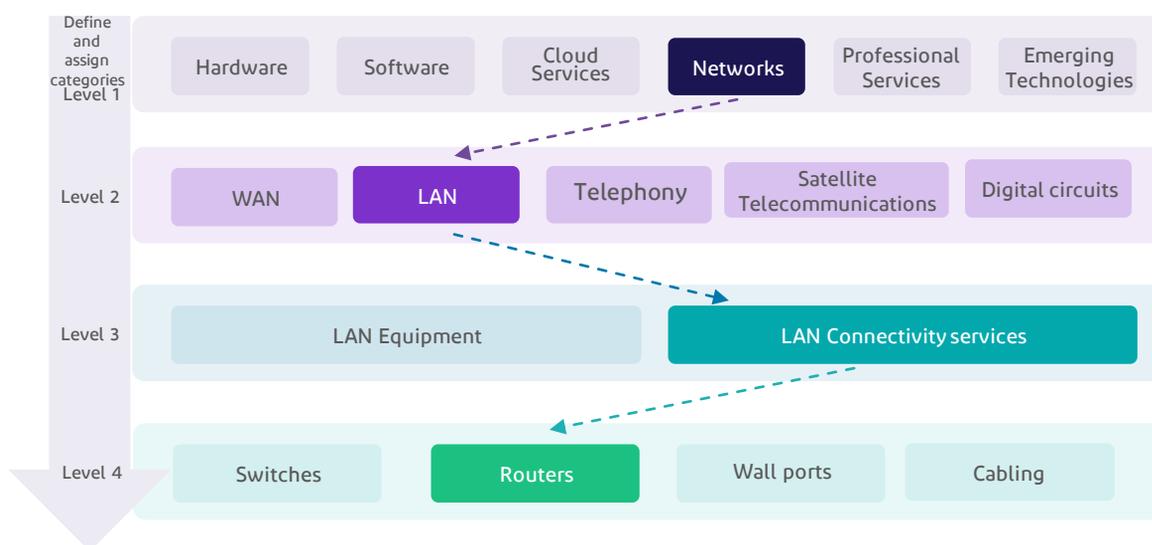


Figure 4: Bill of quantities identification life cycle (Indicative Example)

### 5.2.1.5 Understanding User Needs

Procurement teams shall work closely with a wide variety of stakeholders to best understand what type of product or service is required for purchase and what problem they are trying to resolve through purchase of such products or services. Their cooperation in this area is not only with the "end user", but also encompasses all categories that will benefit from the products or services required from end-users or potential users.

It is important for Procurement officials to understand the following during the user research:

- What are the main target technologies and its use?
- Who are the end-users currently or who the potential end-users?
- What the users' objectives that need to realized by purchase of products or services?
- How users are currently carrying out their tasks?
- How users experience with existing services work and which problems are encountered?
- The basic technical knowledge of digital procurement.

Working collaboratively with end-users can help the procurement officials in the government entities to identify the following:

- Key risks to introducing or changing new technology
- Skills required of the new technology users
- Commercial and operational needs
- Achieve the right outcome from the service in line with users' expectations

Procurement officials may identify the aforementioned points in several ways as follows:

- Review relevant existing guidelines issued by the competent agencies.
- Engaging vendors to better understand the market as an input to define the government entity 's requirements.
- Review the functions and roles including the operational model of the agency, job descriptions and organizational structures in order to identify each other's stakeholders and roles within the government entity .
- Interviewing key stakeholders in all departments/sections of the government entity to identify their functional roles and current difficulties encountered. This would assist procurement officials in visualizing a clear picture of the different types of users that could be classified into different categories.
- Discussions with a variety of stakeholders to ensure a wide range of views and perspectives on the process of understanding users' different needs.
- Consider any opinions other than those of end users as assumptions.
- Once these points have been identified, procurement officials can leverage them to build experience in understanding how users interact with current and future services, as well as collect data on users.

Thanks to this process, procurement teams can obtain a specific vision that they can include in vendors' RFPs based on their knowledge of the different types of users and the specific requirements of their respective categories.

Thus, it is important to understand different user types and identify their specific needs, then benefit from this process in preparation of the communication and IT RFPs (Digital Projects and Programs RFPs) in the future. Without such clear identification of users' needs, it will be difficult to identify which solutions will achieve the best results that users expect. Failure to document the required specifications in the needed products and services will result in the selection of incorrect technical solutions and, consequently, the users' dissatisfaction therewith, which in turn affects the quality of the services provided by the government entity to the beneficiaries.

#### 5.2.1.6 Accessibility

Every government entity shall ensure to make any new service or product as accessible to users as possible, and show how to make technologies available to all users.

When determining the needs of users, government entities may be guided by international standards for accessibility through the Guide issued by the DGA "[Accessibility Guide for Content of Government Websites](#)" or through the [ITU Guide](#), which defined accessibility as "it is designed to meet the needs and capabilities of as many people as possible". Likewise, other international standards for accessibility can be found in [ISO/IEC 71:2014 Guide](#) and in the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), provided that they comply with the relevant laws, policies and regulations in force in Saudi Arabia.

#### Benefits of accessible technology and services include the following:

- Making technology solutions work for as many users across the government entity as possible.
- Providing all personnel with the tools they need to perform effectively and drive spending efficiency across the government entity .
- Ensuring there is no barrier to employing people with special needs.
- Figuring out solutions for potential legal challenges.

government entities shall insure purchase of any service or system that has a clear and simple design so that personnel have no any difficulty using it. The government entity shall establish accessibility as a basic criterion for selecting and purchasing any new technology. It should therefore conduct research with stakeholders on the accessibility requirements of this new technology, make the appropriate decision regarding its purchase and clearly identify it in the documentation of the RFP.

**Upon purchase of a new technology, the following factors shall be considered:**

- Adequate space in the existing office or server room in which the new technology will be installed.
- Hardware is compatible with existing assistive technology
- Software interfaces linked with existing assistive technology
- Estimate whether new solutions need to be tested for alignment with existing programs or not.
- Providing training to users and knowledge transfer.

Building on the foregoing, when purchasing any technology to provide a service via digital platforms or websites, government entities shall take into account the accessibility of the service to the general public within the principles of technology design, including the method, coordination and compatibility with assistive techniques and the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the user's research.

Also, government entities shall prepare the RFP document in a readable and understandable language for all vendors and ensure that clear terms or abbreviations are used, while also ensuring that the same information is provided to all vendors on an equal basis without giving any additional advantage to any vendor.

### **5.2.1.7 User Privacy**

When developing an RFP, consideration shall be given to include user privacy considerations that shall also be taken into account ultimately when selecting technology products and services.

In the meantime, the National Data Management Office (NDMO) in the Saudi Data and AI Authority has adopted controls and specifications for national data management and governance. In order to enable government entities to dispel concerns about privacy, it may review the controls and specifications of national data governance and protection of personal data.

government entities shall take into account privacy as a key requirement upon developing the RFPs, and ensure that vendors address privacy when submitting their proposed solutions. Each government entity shall do its due diligence to keep abreast of the latest legislative requirements for privacy protection.

## 5.2.2 Vendor Selection

Upon selection of vendors, government entities shall investigate vendors available in the market, vendors previously accredited by the relevant agencies or according to the classification certificate targeted by the service, and what is the appropriate way to contract with any new vendors to ensure that they comply with the applicable regulations and standards in Saudi Arabia and verify whether potential vendors are registered on Etimad platform or not.

### 5.2.2.1 Vendor Pre-Qualification Criteria

Entities can conduct pre-qualification pursuant to the provisions of the Government Tenders and Procurement Law and its executive regulations, provided that these criteria are objective, measurable, and related to the technical, financial, and administrative capabilities as well as the amount of contractual obligations of the bidders, and in a manner commensurate with the nature, volume and value of the project or work. The government entity may conduct pre-qualification in large, complex, or high-cost projects whose estimated cost exceeds SAR (fifty) million, for the purpose of identifying qualified bidders before inviting them to submit proposals.

### 5.2.2.2 Vendor Pre-Qualification Assessment

To deliver the best selection output of vendors selection, a comprehensive selection process needs to be undertaken by government entities through vendors assessment against both quantitative and qualitative criteria.

Quantitative methods involve the gathering of data in numerical form to assess the vendor statistically whereas qualitative methods leverage explanations to develop a clear understanding of the vendor capability to fit into the procurement selection. The Guide of Qualifying the Bidders issued by EXPRO can be referred to.

### 5.2.2.3 Vendor Pre-Qualification Selection Criteria

According to [pre-qualification Models](#), the qualification model is divided into three different levels: (level one, level two and level three). The government entity shall determine the qualification level that is commensurate with the nature, volume and value of the project. Furthermore, the government entity shall identify the evaluation points and their weights according to the criteria on "Etimad" platform. [The User Guide of the Pre-qualification Model issued by EXPRO](#) could serve as a guide.

### 5.2.3 Cyber Security Controls

To sustain the targets set in Vision 2030 of continued transformation towards digitalization, it has become of prominent importance to regulate and strengthen Digital security therefore, government entities and vendors shall comply with all the relevant cyber security regulations and controls issued by the National Cybersecurity Authority.

### 5.2.4 Vendor Evaluation Criteria in response to RFPs

Tender documents shall include criteria and ratios for evaluating bids for business and procurement submitted by government entities. These criteria shall be clear and illustrated to vendors along with the manner in which they are used in evaluating their bids and distributing points/weights for each criterion to ultimately ensure objectivity and competitiveness during selection of the appropriate vendor.

Subject to the provisions of the Government Tenders and Procurement Law and its executive regulations, and the provisions of the Regulation on Preference for Local Content and Local SMEs and Companies Listed on the Capital Market in Business and Procurement Transactions, the proposal evaluation criteria shall be clear, objective, and achieve the public interest, and not aim at awarding business to certain bidders.

The following shall be taken into account upon preparation:

- 1) In business that does not require high or complex technical capabilities, the technical proposal evaluation shall be on the basis of passing or not, and the winning proposal shall be the lowest price.
- 2) The highest percentage of weights shall be in consulting services that require high technical capabilities for technical standards.

### 5.2.4.1 Choosing the RFP Assessment Criteria

The Assessment criteria are divided into three sections:

- 1) Basic Criteria
- 2) Weighted Criteria
- 3) Criteria based on the total cost of the project.

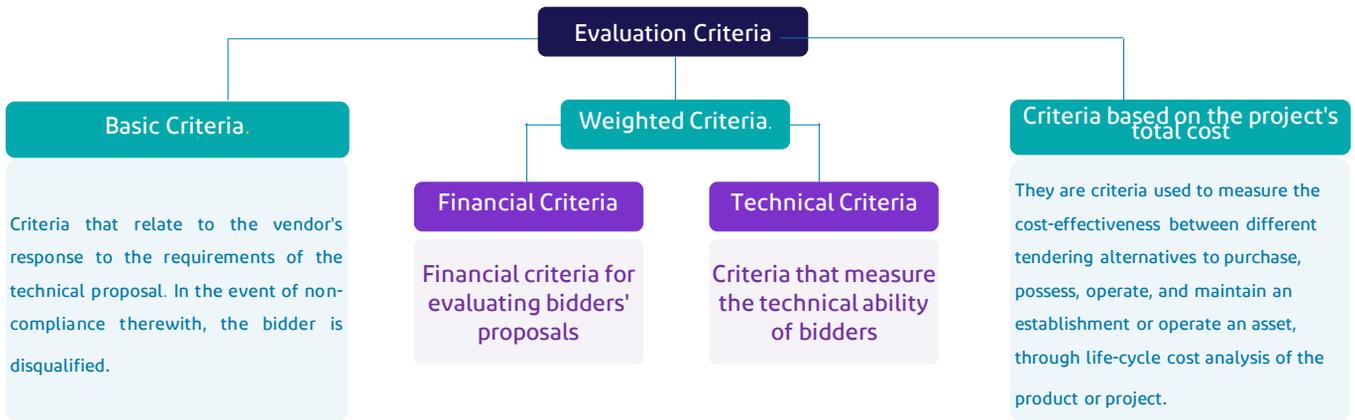


Figure 6: Technical and Financial Evaluation Criteria

### 5.2.4.2 RFP Evaluation Criteria Technical and Financial Evaluation

government entities shall comply with [the controls for preparing proposal evaluation criteria](#) prepared by EXPRO, through which it can select bidders who achieve maximum economic benefits after they meet the evaluation criteria. The government shall clarify the mechanism for evaluating proposals in the RFPs, along with defining the evaluation criteria so that vendors can prepare their proposals in accordance with the priorities of the government entity .

To this end, government entities shall develop criteria and an evaluation model that meet the desired business objectives, achieve the tender expected results and outputs, and create a balance between the importance of price (financial) against quality (technical), provided that the government entity shall explain how to evaluate quality and price. Also, The government entity may review the guidelines for developing proposal evaluation criteria set out in the above-referred controls, in addition to reviewing [the Guideline for Proposal Evaluation Criteria Preparation Controls](#).

When evaluating vendors, different points/weights can be assigned to the technical and financial criteria according to [Proposal Evaluation Criteria Preparation Controls](#). The evaluation criteria shall comply with "[provisions of the Regulations on Preference for Local Content and Local SMEs and Companies Listed on the Capital Market](#)" in Business and Procurements.

In addition to criteria upon which vendors' RFPs are evaluated, an evaluation table might include any additional information such as sub-criteria, descriptions, solutions, exclusion scenarios, minimum requirements that vendors shall meet, along with the proposal submission mechanism.

The table below provides an illustrative example:

Evaluation Criteria	Sub-Criteria	Relative Percentage for evaluation points	Criteria Description
<b>Technical evaluation</b>			
Technical Capabilities	Sub-Technical Criteria 1 (i.e., contractor's technical expertise)	25	Description to foster understanding of criteria
	Sub-Technical Criteria 1 (i.e., additional innovative services)	5	Description to foster understanding of criteria
Previous experiences in a similar field of work	Sub-Technical Criteria (i.e., list of completed projects and their comparable value to the target service)	20	Description to foster understanding of criteria
Technical team capabilities	Sub-Technical Criteria (i.e., list of senior employees and organizational structure)	20	Description to foster understanding of criteria
Project management plan	Sub-Technical Criteria (i.e., project action plan)	20	Description to foster understanding of criteria
Risk management plan and contingency response time	Sub-Technical Criteria (i.e., Risk management plan and speed of response to digital problems)	10	Description to foster understanding of criteria
<b>Financial Evaluation</b>			
Price	Description to foster understanding of criteria	* Financial evaluation result	Sub-Technical Criteria (i.e., warranty and prices)

\* The financial evaluation score = the value of the lowest financial proposal ÷ the value of the financial proposal to be evaluated.

Table 3: An illustrative example of the evaluation criteria table

The government entity shall clarify the controls specified in criteria evaluation, while complying with the provisions of [the Government Tenders and Procurement Law and its executive regulations and the Proposal Evaluation criteria Preparation Controls](#). The following is an illustrative example:

- 1) Determining the technical pass score: Technical evaluation pass score: **70 points** and those with less than 70 points are not financially evaluated.
- 2) In the event that the items are divided, the mechanism is determined: This tender allows items to be divided and awarded to more than one service provider. **The tender will be divided based on proposals separately** to obtain the best quality at the best price.

**3) Determining the technical proposal evaluation weight:** The technical proposal weight constitutes 30% of the total final evaluation.

**4) Determining the financial proposal evaluation weight:** The technical proposal weight constitutes 70% of the total final evaluation.

**5) Determining the weighted score calculation:** Listing [the weighted score equation according to the value and nature of the business](#).

After each government entity finishes defining the technical and financial evaluation criteria, and the vendors selection criteria, as well as including all of that in the RFP, workshops can be held with vendors in order to provide the opportunity for bidders to field visits and ask any questions about the evaluation process and its criteria. Furthermore, to specify for vendors any procedures and requirements related to the mechanisms for submitting their proposals, the proposals closing deadline, and any possible extension of the proposal submission date, in addition to the dates related to the main stages of the tender.

Moreover, government entities shall comply with the provisions of the Government Tenders and Procurement Law and its executive regulations, which clarify the details of the procedures for proposals evaluation and award recommendation, in addition to the mechanism for informing bidders of the tender results and any actions taken thereon.

### **5.2.4.3 Financial Risk Management**

The government entity may assign a special annex in the RFP to be filled by vendors to enter the details of components of their financial proposal to ensure that the government entity verifies any problems with the mechanism of calculating the financial offer that can affect the vendors' financial proposals as compared to the estimated cost of the government entity .

Additionally, risk management process aims at assessing supplier contingency planning and how a continuity of business can be assured under a variety of circumstances that may impact the vendor.

## 5.2.5 Definition KPIs and Creation of SLAs

Service Level Agreements (SLAs) and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are essential RFP components. Therefore, each agency shall establish a clear performance indicators and service level agreements to secure the expected procurement goals and to best measure the performance of vendors.

### 5.2.5.1 Service Level Agreements (SLA) Considerations

Given the importance of service level agreements in determining the details and level of service expected of the vendor, each government entity shall ensure that RFPs clearly include the expected level of service agreements, the criteria for acceptance of the service and the methods of payment, and any fines that the government entity will impose on vendors who fail to meet the objectives agreed upon in such agreements according to the law.

A contract that has no identification of the agreed service level would make the contract subject to misinterpretations, whether intentionally or unintentionally, which could affect vendors' performance and provision of the required service. The government entity shall include an appropriate number of best practices and requirements in the service level agreements to be adopted in measuring vendors' performance in order to maintain the desired results without incurring additional operational costs.

Based on the level of service required by vendors, the government entity shall clarify the details of the services to be supplied and the acceptable service levels in the service level agreements. Moreover, the agency shall establish specific measures to evaluate the vendors' performance, which will lead vendors to adjust their offers and prices in line with these requirements before formally involving in the tender.

The service level agreement document clearly reflects the relationship between the government entity and the vendor, and shall be attached to the RFP annex.

Taking into account the RFP Forms and Contracts approved by the Ministry of Finance, the following components are proposed for inclusion in the RFP, setting out the service level agreements:

- Scope of the service agreement
- Definition of key terms, acronyms, and any excluded service
- Roles and responsibilities between parties and related escalation procedures
- Service level standards, acceptance criteria, and targets for such standards. i.e., for any given system what is the acceptable response time if there is an interruption of service, targets shall be in the form of a percentage (i.e., 99%)
- The mechanism for imposing fines as stipulated in the Government's Competition and Procurement Law.
- Contractual data such as contract renewal date and change control.
- Detail of SLA version history, document amendment history and history of document approvals.

### 5.2.5.2 Key Performance Indicators Considerations

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are significant measures used by government entities to assess vendors' performance against a range of targets and shall be formulated in line with the overall strategic objectives of the project. They shall then be added as part of the Service Level Agreement document. For example, the government entity may select a "response time" for any technical problem solution as a key performance indicator, and limit the vendor's response time to 30 minutes. This indicator is then worded as "supplier response time within 30 minutes", with a target percentage of 98%, and placed in the service level agreement document after agreement with the vendor. Finally, this indicator is used to measure the vendor's performance by calculating the number of incidents to which the vendor responded within the 30-minute time frame out of the total incidents to investigate whether the vendor has achieved the 98% target response rate or not.

The most frequent standards and KPIs monitored within SLAs are:



Figure 7: Most frequent KPIs

Entities shall develop a set of well-structured KPIs that are relevant and proportionate to the project scope, and to select vendor's performance measures that enhance the vendor's expected response based on its business relationship, which can be easily gathered and reported in order to maximize the desired usefulness of its use.

Bearing in mind that many of these indicators shall not included and are difficult to measure so as not to complicate project management, and the selection of key performance indicators commensurate with the achievement of the desired objectives, for example:

- Delivering value for money within the cost thresholds
- Ensure achieving contract output
- Raise beneficiary's satisfaction

An important factor in ensuring that key performance indicators are successful in achieving their intended objective is the government entity 's assurance that vendors know how to measure and review these indicators. The government entity shall therefore ensure to clarify this issue in the RFP document.

### 5.2.6 Clarification Question Form

Etimad platform allows receiving and responding to bidders' inquiries to provide the opportunity for vendors to request more information, inquire about an element of the project scope, or request clarifications about the requirements, services or conditions required in the RFP so that they can prepare their proposals as required, formulate and propose solutions better within the deadline set out at the portal.

The clarifications provided by the government entity in response to the vendors' inquiries and questions shall not lead to substantial changes in the RFPs or have an impact on equal opportunities between bidders. On the other hand, the purpose of clarifications is to illustrate the contents of the RFP in order to ensure that vendors obtain correct and adequate clarifications about the requirements of the government entity. The agency shall publish and distribute all questions and answers to all vendors through Etimad platform within the context of the tender process to help them better understand its requirements and prepare their proposals accordingly. When publishing such questions and answers, the government entity shall be careful and take into account privacy in order to preserve the integrity of the tender process and not give a vendor any competition advantage against another vendors.

One of the best practices in this field is to follow up all requests for clarifications from potential bidders and document them in a special record that can be referred to for future audit purposes

### 5.2.7 Vendor Technical and Financial Bid Sheets

The government entity may annex an additional form dedicated to technical and financial information with each RFP detailing the specifications of the services or products sought thereby so that potential bidders can prepare their proposal accordingly.

The technical and financial information form shall include instructions to bidders on how to fill the bill of quantities and prices in the RFP as required, and what supporting documents are required. This form assist the government entity to easily evaluate vendors' submissions and ensure that the vendor selection process is conducted in an objective and fair manner.

The RFP shall explain the project scope in details and include the list of required digital products and services that the bidder can provide or meet. The government entity may attach some annexes as additional documents to clarify the required specifications mentioned in the RFP.

The technical bid sheet may address and require the prospective bidder to:

- Provide information about the proposing company
- Provide information on the provision of services and products specified in the scope of project
- Provide the extent of compliance with the specifications of services and products to be supplied
- Provide an example of relevant local or regional capabilities of implementing similar projects

The financial bid sheets should address and require the prospective bidder to:

- Provide reference prices for products and services with required specifications
- Provide aggregate prices and reimbursements set at an increase or reduction in the RFP letter, and no reduction made by an independent letter shall be deemed independent even if it was annexed to the RFP .
- Provide baseline percentage and target percentage of local content

The government entity is entitled to request the bidders to sign an undertaking acknowledging the field visit to the site and that it has reviewed the scope of work as well as the terms and conditions of the tender, with these forms to be included in the tender annexes at the submission time thereof.

Vendor RFP forms may be appropriate tools to use in harmonizing the bidding mechanism, easy communication with vendors, and targeted questions and answers.

## 5.3 Sustainable Procurement

government entities shall take sustainable procurement into account in all their digital purchases and evaluate potential vendors of such purchases in accordance with the considerations outlined below.

The DGA has approved the Sustainable Digital Investment Framework to help government entities to address key strategic investment questions and choose effective, scalable technology-based solutions to deliver reusable digital services across Saudi Arabia. The Sustainable Investment Digital Framework includes detailed instructions aimed at guiding government entities and encouraging them to make sustainable digital investments according to a detailed methodology of 8 dimensions of digital sustainability and 40 sub-dimensions of measurement and monitoring.

## 5.4 RFP Checklist Questions

This checklist provides a sense check for entities to review an RFP against the questions in each section. The questions are to be used as prompts to ensure compliance with the Government Tenders and Procurement Law, ensure best practice are being followed as well as RFP's overall alignment with objectives and strategy of the DGA. This list is not exhaustive and it will be adapted as required by each government entity . Not every question is applicable to all RFPs.

Questions #	RFP Criteria Questions
<b>Specification Section</b>	
1	Has the government entity included a scope of work (SOW) in the RFP?
2	Is the SOW relevant for the targeted objectives of the RFP?
3	Is the SOW stating the necessary information for prospective bidders to understand the RFP objectives?
4	Has the government entity provided enough details in the content of the SOW?
5	Does the RFP provide clear product specification, quantity and acceptance criteria?
6	Are the RFP specifications using standardize terminology allowing for the full market vendors to participate?
7	Are the technical specifications included by the government entity as a separate annex?
8	Has the government entity provided the opportunity to vendors to provide alternative solutions by meeting the technical requirements?
9	Has the government entity opted for standardised or customized products and services with an explanatory rationale?
10	Has the government entity specified the necessary local content, national and mandatory products requirements?
11	Are the RFP objectives linking back to government entity 's strategy and KPIs?
12	Are intellectual property rights and criteria been defined by the government entity ?
13	Which criteria are needed to seek stakeholder selection and engagement?
14	Are criteria fulfilled to seek the correct approval?
15	Has the government entity set trade standards and asked vendors to comply with them in the RFP?
16	Has a standardised specification been used as functionally feasible?
17	Has the government entity accounted for the latest data and privacy guidelines?
18	Has the government entity opted for accessible technologies?
19	Has the government entity prioritised a Service based delivery model?
20	Are acronyms clearly defined with accessible language by the government entity through the RFP?
21	Has the government entity clarified the upcoming project requirements, challenges, and objectives?
22	Is the government entity using approved vendors?
23	Is the RFP above the 20,000,000 SAR pre-qualification threshold?
24	Is the government entity requiring pre-qualification criteria?
25	Has the government entity assessed vendors in a comprehensive manner?
26	Is the government entity assessing the vendor using relevant pre-qualification criteria?
27	Is the government entity assessing the vendor based on the requested criteria?
28	Is the government entity keeping proper documentation regarding vendors selection?

Questions #	RFP Criteria Questions
<b>Security Considerations Section</b>	
29	Is the government entity clarifying in the RFP any security measures and regulations to be followed or implemented by vendors?
30	Has the vendor confirmed its capability to comply with all the relevant cybersecurity regulations and controls?
<b>RFP Response Evaluation Criteria Section</b>	
31	Has the government entity clarified the assessment criteria in the RFP?
32	Has the government entity stated exclusion criteria in the RFP?
33	Has the government entity stated the requirements for any mandatory documentation from bidders?
34	Has the government entity clarified proposal scoring mechanisms?
35	Has the government entity clarified scoring weightings as per the assessment?
36	Has the government entity provided information in tender documents to allow vendors to understand the evaluation criteria? (Objectives, background, interlinkages, etc.)
37	Is the government entity using relevant assessment criteria to realize the RFP objectives?
38	Has the government entity clarified whether there is one or two vendor selection stages?
39	Has the government entity made clear in the RFP how vendors can and shall submit proposal and related timeframes?
40	Are tender dates outlined in the RFP by the government entity ?
41	Has the government entity outlined in the RFP the winning procedures process?
42	Has the government entity performed a financial risk assessment?

Questions #	RFP Criteria Questions
<b>Definition and Creation of KPIs and SLAs Section</b>	
44	Has the government entity included an SLA in the RFP and clarified its purpose?
45	Is the SLA relevant to the scope of the RFP?
46	Does the SLA include a detailed outline of the product or service and acceptance levels?
47	Does the SLA include Roles and Responsibilities?
48	Does the SLA include Service level metrics?
49	Does the SLA include KPIs?
50	Does the SLA stipulate penalties or fines?
51	Does the SLA include change management and revision processes?
52	Does the SLA clarify the reporting methods, structure, and cadence?
53	Are KPIs proportionate to the size of the contract?
54	Does the RFP clarify how vendors will be monitored and measured through the KPIs?
<b>Clarification Questions Form Section</b>	
55	Is all communication with potential vendors being tracked and recorded in a unified record?
<b>Vendor Technical and Financial Bid Sheets Section</b>	
56	Is a template for Vendor Technical and Financial information provided?
57	Are the utilized vendor bid sheets relevant to achieve the objectives of the RFP?
58	Are all the necessary technical and quantity details of the RFP clarified into the bid sheets (Financial and Technical Conditions)?
59	Are all the necessary financial and pricing details of the RFP clarified into the bid sheets?
60	Are guidelines included in the bid sheets regarding on how to utilize the same tools?
61	Are any additional requirements stated in the RFP that need to be included in bid sheets? (i.e., accompanying letter requirements)

## 6.5 Additional Consideration Checklist Questions

Questions #	Consideration Questions
<b>Procurement Strategy Section</b>	
1	Can the required products or services be sourced using an existing Framework Agreement?
2	Has the government entity requested a Framework Agreement creation?
3	Is the government entity applying official contracting methods?
4	Is the government entity applying the correct contracting methods as per the Government Tenders and Procurement Law?
5	Has the government entity considered alignment with other departments or other agencies?
6	Is the RFP objective achievable through a Framework Agreement already in existence?
7	Has the government entity defined users and their needs?
<b>Needs Analysis Section</b>	
8	Has the government entity outlined its requirements for ICT procurement in the RFP in detail and included them in the bill of quantities?
9	Has the government entity determined the quality of basic and subsidiary purchases?
<b>Sustainable Procurement Section</b>	
10	Has the government entity clarified whether the vendors are required to abide by sustainable procurement practices?

# 06. Table of Definitions

The following terms and expressions - wherever they appear in this document - shall have the meanings indicated on the opposite side of each of them, unless the context requires otherwise

Term	Definition
Digital Government	Promotes administrative, organizational and operational processes between the various government entities in their transitioning to a comprehensive digital transformation to allow easy and effective access to government digital information and services.
Digital Transformation	Digitally and strategically transforming and developing business standards and models that would rely on data, technologies, and ICT
Government Entity	Ministries, authorities, public institutions, councils, national centers including any additional form of a public entity.
Accessibility	Accessibility or ease of access to ensures that the services are used by all users, and covering inclusiveness, equality, and accessibility guidelines (W3C).
Terms	The terms on which government agencies and vendors conclude their commercial and procurement contracts shall represent and determine precisely each party's rights and obligations as well as compliance with relevant legislation.
Implementation Model	The specific approach used to provide administrative and commercial support to each government entity so that it can achieve its mission.
Approval Platform	Unified government procurement portal supervised by the Ministry of Finance
Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Numerical measurements used to measure vendors' performance against agreed specific targets. These indicators form part of the Service Level Agreement document.
Local Content	Total expenditure in Saudi Arabia through the participation of Saudi agents in the workforce, goods, services, assets, technology and so forth.
Unified Procurement Agency	Expenditure and Project Efficiency Authority
System	Government Tenders and Procurement System

The following terms and expressions - wherever they appear in this document - shall have the meanings indicated on the opposite side of each of them, unless the context requires otherwise

Term	Definition
Framework Agreement	An agreement between one or more government agencies with one or more vendors, contractors and procurers including the terms and conditions of the contracts that will be awarded within a certain period.
Pre-qualification	The government entity verifies the qualifications and capabilities required to carry out work and secure purchases of the bidders prior to their biddings.
Digital Procurement Strategy	A long-term plan for the effective procurement of products and services required to meet the government entity 's needs of such products and services.
Return on Investment	A performance measure used to evaluate and understand the efficiency or profitability of an investment. Similarly, the efficiency of a number of different investments can be compared with their costs.
Service Level Agreement	Contractual commitment between a government entity and a service supplier documenting the level and quality of services expected to be provided by the supplier to achieve agreed goals by evaluating the supplier's performance according to a set of measures.
SMEs	Local enterprises (micro, small- and medium-sized enterprises) by classification of the Small and Medium Enterprises General Authority.
Project Scope	One of the main sections of the RFP that includes a description of the specific purchase requirements by defining the scope of the purchase process, project outputs, schedules, project location, payment terms, and success criteria. It also defines commitments and responsibilities between government agencies and vendors.
Total Cost of Ownership (TCO)	A financial estimate to determine the direct and indirect costs of owning any product or system, which contributes to choosing the best vendors based on the total cost and not the cost of procurement across the entire life cycle of the asset.

# 07. Relevant References and Legislation

## Key Relevant Documents from Approved Sources

Source Type	Document
Saudi Vision	Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030
Legislation	Government Tenders and Procurement Law
Legislation	Instructions for the delivery of national products on the mandatory list or national products subject to the national product price preference mechanism
Legislation	Executive Regulation of the Government Tenders and Procurement Law
Legislation	Preference Regulation for Local Content, SMEs and Companies Listed in the Capital Market
Policy	Saudi Arabia's policy of Cloud Computing First Policy
Policy	National Cybersecurity Strategy
Strategic Direction	Strategic Direction – Digital Government Authority
Policy	National Data Governance Interim Regulations
Policy	National Products Mandatory List
Controls	Essential Cybersecurity Controls (ECC-1:2018)
Controls	Cybersecurity Regulatory Framework (CRF)
Controls	Cloud Cybersecurity Controls (CCC-1:2020)
Controls	Critical Systems Cybersecurity Controls(CCC-1:2019)
Controls	Controls for Preparation of criteria for Proposal Assessment
Guidelines	Open-Data Handbook
Forms	ECC-1:2018 Assessment and Compliance Tool
Forms	Cybersecurity regulations and service provider supporting forms in the telecommunications, information technology and postal sectors.
Forms	The National Cybersecurity Authority Form of reporting a security vulnerability
Forms	Forms of contracts and RFPs
Forms	Pre-qualification and post-qualification forms
Forms	Performance Evaluation Form (Information Technology Services)
Useful Resources	Training Material for the Guideline for the Bidder Qualification Controls
Useful Resources	Training Material for the Proposal Evaluation Criteria Preparation Controls
Useful Resources	Local Content Provisions
Useful Resources	Masdar website
Useful Resources	World Wide Web Consortium
Useful Resources	Etimad Portal
Useful Resources	MOF Knowledge Repository
Useful Resources	Manassa Tech Portal
Useful Resources	CITC Portal
Useful Resources	International Telecommunication Union (ITU)
Useful Resources	ISO/IEC Guide 71:2014
Useful Resources	Small and Medium Enterprises General Authority website “Munsha’t”
Useful Resources	National Cybersecurity Authority

